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Reagan Advisers Hold Somber View of Soviet Intentions

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WASHINGTON, May 24 — Late in 1976, as Jimmy Carter was preparing to enter the White House, the American intelligence community was jolted by a forceful critique from an officially appointed panel of outside experts who contended that the Soviet Union was striving not just for strategic parity with the United States but for nuclear superiority.

This estimate of the Soviet Union's long-term strategic buildup and its intentions, a striking dissent from American intelligence estimates over the years, became sharply controversial. Members of the outside panel, known as the "B team" because the Government's intelligence experts were called the "A team," were accused of being alarmist hard-liners bent on increasing American military programs or scuttling the strategic arms limitation talks.

Since then the American intelligence agencies and even President Carter have come to accept the B team's central conclusion about Moscow's strategic goals. Moreover, members of the B team have become key foreign policy advisers to Ronald Reagan, the almost certain Republican Presidential nominee.

The foreign policy and defense advisers to the former California Governor, now numbering over 90, have been extended beyond predominantly conservative Republicans to include such experienced officials as former Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert F. Ellsworth; former Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Charles E. Walker; Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a sprinkling of such Democrats as Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, a Georgetown University professor of government.

Handful of Team Members

At the core of the working groups is a handful of key B team members — William R. Van Cleave, a defense-policy analyst at the University of Southern California; Richard E. Pipes, a Harvard historian who has written many books on the Soviet Union; Lieut. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, former director of the Defense

Intelligence Agency, and Seymour Weiss, former director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs at the State Department.

The other active figures working closely with Richard V. Allen, Mr. Reagan's principal campaign coordinator for foreign policy, are Fred C. Ikle, former director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency; Laurence H. Silberman, former Deputy Attorney General and Ambassador to Yugoslavia; Robert W. Tucker, a political science professor at Johns Hopkins University, and Lieut. Gen. Edward L. Rowny, who resigned as the Joint Chiefs' representative at the strategic arms talks to oppose ratification of the second strategic arms limitation treaty.

"It's a Republican group, right astride of Republican views on foreign policy and defense," said Mr. Allen, a 44-year-old specialist on Soviet and international economic affairs who was Deputy Assistant to President Nixon. "There are differences within the group, but if we have any area where there's unanimity, it would be for increased defense spending."

Beyond that, the writings of the intellectual inner circle reflect a somber world view, akin to Mr. Reagan's but possibly more pessimistic. Long before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan aroused new skepticism about détente and Soviet strategy, the Reagan advisers were disturbed by the buildup of Soviet power and Soviet outward thrusts and alarmed at what they saw as the loss of American nuclear superiority and the general shrinkage of American power.

Soviet Preparing for War

Writing in Commentary in July 1977, Professor Pipes, who headed the B team, argued that the American concept of nuclear deterrence was becoming outmoded because the Soviet Union was preparing to fight and win a nuclear war. The Russians, he wrote, sought "not deterrence but victory, not sufficiency in weapons but superiority, not retaliation but offensive action." He added that "the regime is driven by ideology, internal politics and economic exigencies steadily to expand."

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